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ABSTRACT

This document presents a description of guidelines for the employment of auxiliaries or teacher aides. Among the areas discussed are tha following: (a) suggested methods for recruiting potential teacher aides; (b) the qualifications needed for the position; (c) hiring procedur's (recommended are an initial interview, trial participatory experience in classrooms at different grade levels, an evaluative conference for the candidate and the hiring personnel, and a final conference of school personnel); (d) placement of paraprofessionals (especially teacher-paraprofessional teaming); and (e) employment practices. (JA)

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Differentiated Staffing: A Procedure for Implementation

by

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RECRUITMENT OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Once a particular school system or community has recognized the need for auxiliaries and has gained an affirmative commitment from the respective governing body, the initial questions will probably be: "Where and how do we find interested people?" and "How do we 'reach' them?"

Such factors as age boundaries, academic preparation and experiential background of the people considered to be of value as teacher aides are limited only by the inagination and degree of creativity of the program's administrator.

Aides may range in age from the mid-teens to post-retirement age. Their academic backgrounds may span from non-high school graduates to college trained. They may be mothers of school-aged children, retired businessmen with time to spare, or high school "drop-outs" looking for a job through which they may hope to better themselves.

In recruiting prospective candidates no alternative can be left unexplored. In inner-city situations all community agencies and resources must be tapped. Such agencies as Head-Start, Get-Set, Action for Community Development, United Fund, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Senior Citizen groups, ad infinitum, may yield unexpected riches.

State employment and college placement offices have files that are bulging with possible future aides. A phone call or two in these cases may net some valuable results.

All means of mass communication should be utilized. Nearly everyone reads newspapers, watches television or listens to the radio. Some newspapers are inclined to give free space to items of community benefit. Most radio stations have "community bulletin-board" type programs which provide free "air-time" for announcements in the public interest.

Another approach might be to invite a team of auxiliaries, teachers and administrators from a neighboring community to present a forum or panel discussion using a local radio station's program or a meeting of a specific interest group as a vehicle.

Even if a lack of funds prohibits any substantial cash outlay, a school system could proceed with a simple mail device. An attractive, mimeographed brochure containing vital role descriptions, job qualifications, and career opportunities could be mailed to all agency and media resources. (The mail device could also be integrated with any of the other procedures.) This practice can bring forth amazing results.

All in all, once a system gets the "green light" to implement an aide program it should proceed with deliberate speed.

HIRING OF PARAPROFESSIONALS - QUALIFICATIONS

It would not be feasible to pursue a viable recruitment program without first delineating at least some very general criteria to be considered inherent to applicants who wish to become successful aides.

For example, if a person does not relate easily to or interact well with children, he should re-appraise his goals in relation to the role he wishes to assume. He may still be a valuable component in the capacity of

a clerical aide but it is advisable that each applicant be able to meaningfully communicate with children and with all other personnel he is likely to come into contact with. He should be of a perceptive nature in his dealings with people. He should possess an attitude of flexibility, for he should be receptive to constructive critism and amenable to positive change.

He must also be of good physical health and should reflect emotional stability.

More important than his academic background is his capability for human and career growth and development in the on-the-job situation.

Since it is preferred that the aide generally be a local resident, he should be acceptable to the community at large.

The most important prerequisite an aide should possess is a dedication to the children he is helping to educate.

HIRING OF PARAPROFESSIONALS - PROCEDURES

As soon as possible after the completed application form is returned, the candidate should be scheduled for an initial conference with the administrator of the program. This opportunity should be utilized to clearly communicate job descriptions, conditions of employment and the hiring procedure. It should also serve as a means for the interviewer to informally appraise the personality and temperament of the applicant. At this time a written appraisal form may be distributed to be returned at a later date.

After the initial screening has taken place, by way of an informal interview, the candidate should be asked to take part in a trial participatory experience in classrooms at different grade levels.

There should be a number of classrooms supervised by master teachers available specifically for this purpose. These teachers should be skilled in observation, human relations, and classroom dynamics techniques so that the exploratory experience on the part of the aide is sure to be a positive one.

During this trial period the prospective aide should be asked to spend at least three days each with no fewer than two and no more than four different teachers and grade levels.

The cooperating teachers should be provided with enough observation time with the candidate to enable them to make a qualitative appraisal of his potential.

After the trial experience has been completed, an evaluative conference for the candidate and the hiring personnel should be held. The purpose of this meeting is that it gives the aide the specific opportunity to relate his feelings, findings, newly established goals and personal preferences. The interviewer also has an opportunity to note any qualitative attitudinal changes that may have taken place within the candidate since the first meeting. (Note: It is advisable that the same person conducts all interviews of each respective candidate.)

At this point a conference of the observation team, including teachers other auxiliaries, and administrators, should be held. The purpose of this conference is to make known any consensus or disagreement that may exist on the part of the present staff. An assessment of the applicants skill in

human relationships and reflected attitudes should be made note of.

The last step involved in the hiring procedure is a discussion period to be attended by the prospective aide, personnel director, school principal, and teachers, with community and paraprofessional groups represented. At this time an informal discussion should be used as a vehicle for assessing the attitudes, interests, and goals of the candidate. The applicant's responses to a previously completed attitudinal inventory may be used to guide any questioning that may take place. It should be noted that the entire hiring procedure should take no longer than two weeks to complete.

PLACEMENT OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

When the procedure for hiring has transpired and the aide is about to be employed, the question of placement arises. In dealing with programs in which human relations and interactions are of vital importance, as in the professional - paraprofessional context, it may be noteworthy to put forth a number of pertinent guidelines.

Paraprofessionals should only be assigned to a teacher who has made some positive indication that he will be amenable to the classroom-team concept.

The teacher should be fully aware of the scope of new responsibilities to be undertaken in this regard.

The paraprofessional should have full flexibility in the choice of the role she is about to assume, such as: instructional assistant, media assistant, clerical aide, resource center aide, etc.

Teacher-paraprofessional teaming should be done on a very careful basis, but it should be made clear that no placement is necessarily of a permanent nature. On the contrary, it may be advisable to suggest that a number of changes may be expected during the beginning period. It should also be made clear to each participant that because of individual differences teams may have personality conflicts which may be easily and positively solved by simply making a placement change in which personalities may be of a more complementary rather than conflicting nature.

If it is at all possible, teams should be racially integrated. This concept will probably be most frequent in inner-city communities where it is considered of the utmost importance to have an adult model within the classroom for every child.

It must be remembered that there is much difficulty involved in attempting to predict the level of success of any applicant. Each situation has assets and liabilities particularly inherent to itself and because of these factors procedural modifications should be made to meet the needs of each community or system. For example, some communities may prefer to pay candidates for the time spent during the hiring procedure while others may not. Some systems may ask a candidate to serve in a voluntary capacity for an extended period of time while others may be faced with an emergency situation which will dictate a shorter pre-service experience. In any case, it is advisable that hiring procedures remain congruent to the community's exigencies.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Paraprofessionals should be hired on an annual contract basis with fringe benefits and a salary based on current teachers' salaries.

Full-time aides could be salaried according to an administratively approved extension of existing salary/~~experience scales~~.

Fringe benefits will vary from system to system but might include a medical and life insurance group program, specified personal and illness leave time with pay, a payroll savings deduction program, etc.

Aides who are appointed on a part-time basis might be paid in proportionate fractional equivalents contiguous with the full-time aide's salary.

Each teacher-paraprofessional team should be allowed a prescribed amount of in-school time for planning and conferences. This practice would not only save the teacher the valuable time of explaining each day's goals to the aide but would also make the planning itself easier, more comprehensive, and more intelligent.

Released time should also be provided for the aide if she desires to pursue additional educational or developmental growth which would ultimately be of benefit to the students.

The paraprofessional should be made fully aware of the importance of an "on-going" evaluation procedure of the entire program and of its members for the ultimate betterment of the teaching/learning situation.

This evaluation process can include such vehicles as interviews, attitude appraisals, questionnaires, and administrative observation but it should be made clear that the quality of any evaluation program is only as

good as the educational advances that can be made as a result of the intelligent use of "feedback."

The most important principle in the process is that there should be a fostering of the self-appraisal concept in view of the goals of the program and the implementation of change on the part of the aide in the quest for personal improvement.